United Nations A/52/PV.90

General Assembly

Fifty-second Session

Official Records

90th plenary meeting
Thursday, 30 July 1998, 5.10 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Udovenko ..... (Ukraine)

The meeting was called to order at 5.10 p.m.

Tidal waves in Papua New Guinea

The President: Before turning to the item on our agenda this afternoon, may I, on behalf of all the Members of the General Assembly, extend our deepest sympathy to the Government and to the people of Papua New Guinea for the tragic loss of life and extensive material damage which have resulted from the recent tidal waves. May I also express the hope that the international community will show its solidarity and respond promptly and generously to any request for help.

I now call on the representative of Papua New Guinea.

Mr. Ovia (Papua New Guinea): I would like to take this opportunity to thank you and the international community for thinking of us in our time of need.

As all of us have learned through the media, it has been confirmed that between 1,600 and 1,700 people have died as a result of the tsunami in Papua New Guinea. The tsunami has affected about five villages on the northwest coast of Papua New Guinea. At this point, there are between 900 and 1,000 people still missing. Approximately 7,000 people have been affected by the tsunami.

On behalf of my Government, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the countries that have contributed in terms of technical assistance, aid, cash donations, medicines and all the material that is pouring into Papua New Guinea. We would also like to take this opportunity to thank all the volunteers, including the personnel of the United Nations — through the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Children's Fund — the Red Cross, the Red Crescent and the numerous non-governmental organizations that are currently helping in Papua New Guinea.

Immediate medical help is ongoing, but at the moment the Government is embarking on the long-term strategy of how to relocate the people, especially the children, who are greatly affected. The schools in four villages have been washed away. Therefore, the Government's immediate need is to restore the schools and the health centres of these villages.

Once again, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the international community for its assistance to our country.

Agenda item 119 (*continued*)

Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations (A/52/785/Add.9)

The President: I should now like to draw the attention of the General Assembly to document A/52/785/Add.9. In a letter contained in that document, the Secretary-General informs the President of the General Assembly that, since the issuance his communications contained in document A/52/785 and Corr.1 and Add.1-8, Cape Verde has made the necessary

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payment to reduce its arrears below the amount specified in Article 19 of the Charter.

May I take it that the General Assembly duly takes note of this information?

It is so decided.

Agenda item 157 (*continued*)

United Nations reform: measures and proposals

Notes by the Secretary-General (A/52/851 and Corr.1 and Add.1)

Draft decision (A/52/L.79)

The President: The General Assembly has before it the text of a draft decision which will be issued tomorrow as document A/52/L.79 in all official languages. For the purposes of the verbatim reporters I shall read out the text of this draft decision.

> "The General Assembly decides to continue consideration of the proposal of the Secretary-General 'Time limits of new initiatives' (document A/52/851 and Corr.1 and Add.1) at the fifty-third session of the General Assembly."

We shall now proceed to take a decision on the draft decision contained in document A/52/L.79.

May I take it that the General Assembly decides to adopt the draft decision?

Draft decision A/52/L.79 was adopted.

The President: I call now on those delegations wishing to explain their positions on the decision just adopted.

Mr. Wibisono (Indonesia): Mr. President, I wish on behalf of the Joint Coordination Committee of the Non-Aligned Movement the Group of 77 and China (JCC) to place on record our deep appreciation for your efforts in making new proposals to bridge the gap among Members. In a spirit of consensus, the JCC finds your proposal acceptable.

The JCC takes this opportunity to express its concern at the fact that the General Assembly did not make use of the time between April and now. I would like to recall that, at the time the General Assembly considered the proposal in April and May 1998, the JCC suggested that the relevant bodies should make use of the time available to consider the proposal of the Secretary-General.

Finally, Sir, I thank you for your untiring efforts and your leadership.

Mr. Manz (Austria): The European Union would like to take this opportunity, Sir, to thank you again for your efforts in leading us to a consensus, albeit only a procedural one. We appreciate this all the more since we did not feel that there was any chance of substantive agreement on this issue because of the position of certain delegations.

We would like to remind the delegation of Indonesia, which just spoke on behalf of the Joint Coordination Committee of the Non-Aligned Movement and the Group of 77 and China that, as much as they regret that what are in their view the competent bodies did not have an opportunity to look at the proposal in question, the General Assembly had decided otherwise. So we can hardly call this an oversight or a missed opportunity. On the contrary, just like the decision we have just taken, this was a political decision by the General Assembly taken in full knowledge of its implications.

We hope that it will be possible during the fifty-third session to proceed to a more substantive discussion of these issues. We would like to express our thanks again to everybody who made this deferral by consensus possible.

Mr. Darwish (Egypt) (*interpretation from Arabic*): My delegation supports the statement just made by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Joint Coordination Committee of the Non-Aligned Movement and the Group of 77 and China. We too regret that the General Assembly decided not to give its competent subsidiary bodies the chance to study and discuss the proposal — and hence not to make use of their expertise. That is why we have doubts and misgivings about the fate of this proposal and about the manner in which it will be discussed in the future. We would have wanted the General Assembly to benefit from the expertise of the relevant bodies between now and the fifty-third session, which is why we fully support what the representative of Indonesia said in that respect.

On a procedural point, it was as an exception that my delegation accepted the draft decision without its having been translated into all six official languages of the United Nations. I hope that this omission will be rectified, and that all future draft resolutions and draft decisions will be translated into all official languages before the General Assembly takes action on them.

Ms. Buergo Rodriguez (Cuba) (*interpretation from Spanish*): My delegation joins other delegations, Mr. President, in thanking you for your efforts towards the adoption of the decision on which the General Assembly has just taken action.

We too are somewhat concerned about the adoption of a text in this way: on the basis of a document that has not yet been formally issued, even though we have been told that it will be issued tomorrow as document A/52/L.79. We take note of the exceptional nature of this procedure, which was employed with a view to achieving consensus and taking a decision this afternoon, but we hope that proper attention will be given to this situation and that it will not be repeated.

My delegation fully associates itself with the statement made by the representative of Indonesia.

The President: I wish to take this opportunity to thank all delegations directly or indirectly involved in the process of negotiations. Yes, it did indeed take a few months of almost uninterrupted informal consultations since 6 May on this and other issues pertaining to the proposals and recommendations contained in the relevant reports of the Secretary-General. This invisible activity included, for instance, the Cartagena meeting and other important meetings. This invisible activity led us to the adoption of what I would say is a very important decision not only of a procedural nature but also on substantive issues, because the General Assembly has decided to recommend that the next session of the Assembly continue the consideration of the report of the Secretary-General. In previous decisions, which we also adopted by consensus, we had welcomed the efforts of the Secretary-General in that direction.

As I said during an informal meeting of the Assembly, we now have a relatively long time to consider in depth this proposal and to take a decision at the fifty-third session.

Having said that, I would like once again to thank all delegations for their cooperation and for the kind words they addressed to me.

We have thus concluded this stage of our consideration of agenda item 157.

The meeting rose at 5.30 p.m.